



Premio Internazionale Carlo Scarpa per il Giardino

31st edition

**Güllüdere and Kızılçukur:**

**the Rose Valley and the Red Valley in Cappadocia**

## Statement of the Carlo Scarpa Prize

The Scientific Committee of the Fondazione Benetton Studi Ricerche has unanimously decided to dedicate the thirty-first edition of the International Carlo Scarpa Prize for Gardens to a place emerging out of the complex history and geographies of Cappadocia: two contiguous valleys carved out of volcanic rock known as the Rose and Red Valleys or Güllüdere and Kızılçukur in Turkish.

In the heart of the Anatolian peninsula, the age-old bridge for the different cultures of Asia and Europe, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, lies Cappadocia with its thousand-metre-high plateaus surrounded by majestic volcanoes. The landscape is arid, carved out by wind and water; the difficult climate has inclement seasons fluctuating between drought and the sudden abundance of water, between oppressive summer heat and the rigour of the winter cold. All of these factors shape the exceptional, recognizable features of a region distinguished by natural setting rather than by administrative boundaries. In the first century, this land saw the arrival of early Christianity and of the Church Fathers, followed by the diffusion of the Byzantine culture with its countless hermit and monastic settlements, churches and sanctuaries that would form one of the foremost Christian communities of the first millennium.

This left us a legacy of spaces containing incredible cycles of paintings. As the Byzantine presence disappeared from the 13th century onwards, the sacred buildings and other constructions scattered throughout this vast territory were gradually turned into stables, rural dwellings, and cisterns, and into a multitude of dovecotes for the birds providing farmers with guano to fertilize their fields.

The two valleys emerging from this context reveal the extent and profound value of a landscape where, between the form of human settlement and the sensational geology of its soil, the traces of an ancient culture of prevalently rupestrian settlements, are conserved; traces that hold an equilibrium between the different expressions of nature and the various cultures succeeding each other over the centuries.

At the same time, everything here evokes the contradictions of today's society – like the abandonment of places and the consumption of landscape resulting from mass tourism and its fast pace – but also the quest to cultivate a fresh gaze. This gaze would draw upon what has struggled to survive and regenerate in order to develop a new vision of the instruments, of the human relations, and of the forms of government needed to promote an awareness of landscape oriented less to a hit-and-run approach and more towards hospitality and in-depth encounters.

Not far from Göreme (between Cappadocia's two largest towns: Nevşehir and Kayseri), along the road leading from the village of Çavuşin to Ortahisar, the Red Valley and the two branches of Rose Valley run eastwards beside each other as far as the bottom of the massif separating them from the Zelve Valley. They are linked by a network of often steep pathways and steps cut into the rock, crossing a succession of plateaus. It is a landscape that can only be understood by means of slow steps and tangible relationships. This is the only way to appreciate the exceptional, very fragile and complex nature of these places, which are, however, often reduced to an immediate univocal perception associating the morphology of the constantly eroding, scoured rocks with the seductive, fixed image of fantastical figures like the 'fairy chimneys'.

The two valleys, which cover some three square kilometres, are an ecosystem distinguished by dry climate and lack of water. The humans formerly living here were forced to dig into the rocks to find shelter from the severe winters and from the extreme summer temperatures of these high-altitude territories.



Deeply cut into the terrain of the plateaus, the two valleys are the result of a continuous evolution of the volcanic geological stratifications that have determined the type of settlement, the fertility of the soil, and the unique adaptability of the rock formations to the need of the local inhabitants to construct shelters for themselves and their animals.

Alongside the deep canyons carved out by the water is a patchwork of cultivated fields and terraces with orchards and vineyards, interrupted by uncertain paths and tracks running along the beds of torrents. The existence of complex arrangements of rooms dug out of the dark interiors of the rocky mass, seem to be betrayed by cracks and endless openings from erosion.

This place invites us to get to know it better, both through slow exploration of its fantastic forms and appearances and through the acknowledgement of the invisible dimension of a landscape where humans have found room and refuge in the bare rock, creating living spaces moving between darkness and light, dividing their time between carving out the tuff and cultivating the soils produced by the erosion of the very rock forming their dwellings.

Scattered throughout the valleys are churches and monastery complexes, many of which rock-cut, complex forms of architecture whose volumes are covered in rich paintings, spaces invisible from the outside if it were not for the collapse of an external wall or partition. The painted surfaces re-emerge from thick layers of soot and centuries of neglect: partial apparitions but enough to understand the importance of the Byzantine culture that dominated the social life and landscape of this region for so many centuries.

The churches in the valleys are like the nodes of a now barely visible network of relations: interiors filled with references to the landscape generating them help us to understand and grasp this complex interdependency. Some are housed in the compact structure of a tuff cone, others are dug out of a rock wall: the former – churches like the Church of St Agathangelos (also known as Church of the Three Crosses, in Turkish *Üç Haçlı Kilise*), of St John (also known as Quince Church, in Turkish *Ayvalı Kilise*) or of Nicetas Stylites (also known as Grape Church, in Turkish *Üzümlü Kilise*) – invite us to find their entrances between the stairs and narrow passageways in these rural structures; the latter – like the Column Church or the Church of St Joachim and St Anne – more accessible given their location by the main road, lie behind walls that are being worn away and rendered less safe by the effects of erosion.

Long neglected and rarely described by European travellers until the 18th century, Cappadocia was only really 'discovered' in the early 20th century, marking the start of exploration and studies. In 1969, the Italian poet and director Pier Paolo Pasolini turned his piercing solitary gaze upon the region, setting the narration of his *Medea* in the rocky landscape mingling "the colour pink and the poor ochre".

The more adventurous forms of exploration would later turn into a wider awareness regarding the need to safeguard these places and to recognize their cultural value, culminating in 1985 with UNESCO's inscription of the site in the list of World Heritage sites (attributed specifically to "Göreme National Park and to the rock sites of Cappadocia"). However, the inclusion of the site on the list has accelerated the many contradictions of a local and global society experiencing tourist presence both as an extraordinary economic opportunity and as a threat to the integrity and possible future of the common heritage of humanity officially being safeguarded.

From these valleys too comes a valuable lesson transmitted by their long history, which the Carlo Scarpa Prize will help bring to our world and diffuse among us: this lesson is related, above all, to the need to read and interpret places as unitary organisms, in which relations, institutional and scientific duties, and that which constitutes the substance and form of a landscape are all expressed in terms of responsibility and a sense of belonging in an attempt to keep at bay the threat of degradation and overexploitation. We witnessed this twenty years ago with regard to the Agdal, Marrakech (2000), and even more so in Dura Europos, Syria (2010), but also in Sicily, at Maredolce-La Favara (2015), the Arab-Norman garden on the outskirts of Palermo. Cappadocia, with its unique geology and the relationship joining its inhabitants to this endlessly stratified environment, recalls an equally stunning volcanic landscape, one surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, on the island of Lanzarote where art and the work of the land came together in an inhospitable setting to give birth to a garden, the Jardín de Cactus.

Güllüdere and Kızılcucur, the Rose and Red Valleys, are set centrally in an area currently hyperdynamic with economic and social development. Standing out within this context of rapid



changes, abandonment of traditional landscapes, emergence of new uses and forms of settlement, and overall rise in studies into the vast historical heritage of Cappadocia is an Italian work group whose recovery of the precious paintings contained in these rock-cut churches restores legibility and value to the entire landscape. Their work and presence on site has established relationships that are important not only with regard to technical support but also as part of an overarching network of cultural and institutional exchange, of human relations contributing to the growth of international recognition as well as to the development of an awareness of this landscape among its inhabitants. Their work embodies the importance of citizenship, the sense of belonging and of care for a place that overrides all national boundaries.

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Motivated by reasons connected to the universal value of place, to its deep links to its history along with the merits of those who have been able to recognize its significance, have taken responsibility for its present management, and are asking questions about its future perspectives, the Scientific Committee of the Fondazione Benetton Studi Ricerche has decided to award the Carlo Scarpa seal to the art historian Maria Andaloro, the promoter and director of the research mission organized by the Università della Tuscia. Since 2006, Maria Andaloro has travelled between Italy and Cappadocia, promoting a campaign transmitting ceaseless care and know-how accompanied by an awareness of the landscape in terms of belonging and responsible safeguarding.

The Prize now in her hands is intended to express our closeness and support for all those people working in Cappadocia to safeguard and diffuse the awareness of a special heritage rich in meanings and teachings.